

## THE OLD AND NEW INVASION

BY

RABBI NATHAN TARAGIN

*Philadelphia, Pa.*

In the fourth book of Moses we read: וידבר ד' אל משה לאמר: שלח לך אנשים ויתרו את ארץ כנען אשר אני נותן לבני-ישראל "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: 'Send thou men that they may spy out the land of Canaan which I give unto the children of Israel . . . ". (Numbers XIII: 1-2). ותשא כל העדה ויתנו את קולם ויבכו העם בלילה ההוא. "And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried and the people wept that night." (Ibid, XIV:1).

According to historians and Bible critics the incident of sending the expeditionary force of the twelve explorers, the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel to investigate the nature of the Palestinian fortifications and the character of its inhabitants, occurred about three thousand years ago,—one year after the children of Israel had left Mt. Sinai upon which the Ten Commandments were given. From Mt. Sinai the Israelites proceeded to Kadeshbarnea, where they established their main supply base for future operations against their common foe.

From this base the High Command had planned to march north in order to invade the Negeb. This plan materialized. The Negeb was occupied in spite of the strong and stubborn resistance of King Arad who dwelt in the South (Numbers XXI:1). The foe suffered a crush-

ing blow which turned into a complete annihilation and in tribute of the 'utter destruction' of the enemy, the conquered territory was named 'Hormah'.

Moses, the great warrior, enthused by the initial successes felt that the moment was opportune for the conquest of the Holy Land from this advanced base.

However, a group of 'Isolationist' Jews, better known in those days by their famed name of אַסַּפּוּסִי, bitterly opposed the immediate invasion of Palestine. Those Asafsuf Jews were a mixture of wealthy assimilationists and aristocratic Israelites who accumulated great fortunes during the dark days of Egyptian slavery and had opposed the liberation, as it is pointed out by the Rabbis of the Midrash *היו להם פמרונין יהי' להם עושר וכבוד ולא היו רוצים לצאת*. The same slavery-minded Jews strongly demanded from Moses that prior to the conquest of Palestine an investigation committee be sent to spy out and explore all phases of Palestine and its residents, with the prime objective in their minds to delay the invasion and the liberation of the Land of our Fathers and to demoralize the high fighting spirit of the triumphant armies.

Following a forty day spying the majority reported that 'the people that dwell in the land are fierce, and the cities are fortified and very great; and moreover we saw the children of Anak there' insinuating that at the present time there can be no question of the conquest of Eretz Yisroel.

Upon hearing the unfavorable report, all the Jews cried and wept that night. A double tragedy resulted from that unfortunate incident. The entire generation of the Midbar was decreed to die during the forty years

of wandering, equivalent to the forty days of spying and a new generation had to be reared up which was worthy of true freedom in its Homeland. Future generations until this very day have been suffering on account of the Mraglim. As our Sages point out in the Talmud: *אומן הלילה ערב תשעה-באב היה. אמר להם הקב"ה אתם בכיתם.* "The night in which the spies reported about Palestine, was the Eve of Tisha B'ab, the Ninth of Ab and G-d exclaimed: 'You have cried in vain, however, I shall decree that night as a permanent night of weeping and mourning.'" For on the night of the Ninth of Ab, the first and second Holy Temple in Jerusalem were destroyed.

What a glorious message we find for Israel and for mankind in this historic incident.

The world to-day is confronted with similar incidents as the Jews were confronted with in the days of Moses. To-day as then, there are in our midst *סרגלים* spies and tale-bearers, and the Asafsuf, the assimilationists who have assumed leadership in the so-called "American Council for Judaism". These self proclaimed leaders are using every means at their disposal to cause dissension in the ranks of Israel with their prime objectives,—to demoralize and discourage Israel's hopes, dreams and aspirations for the establishment of a Jewish National Homeland in Palestine. Perhaps thanks to their intervention and powerful influence in the high spheres of influence, the passage of the recent Palestine Resolution which was introduced in the House of Representative and Senate, was postponed and barred indefinitely.

Little do these Jews realize that they are endan-

gering the life of all Israel. It is recalled by our Sages as afore-mentioned that the very period when the Jews in the wilderness shed tears because of the evil report of the spies, was the Eve of Tisha B'ab. The world to-day is witnessing a similar state of affairs. If I were asked to characterize it I would say, "the world of to-day is in a state of Erev Tisha B'ab. We have to fast and mourn for the destruction of the many lives of our brethren across the seas". In a sense the destruction of our people may be considered worse than the destruction of the Holy Temples in Jerusalem. For without Jews a Temple has no meaning. As Achad Ha'am once said, "if a land is destroyed or a Temple laid in ruins, a great leader can still rise to rebuild the land or the Temple, but if a people is destroyed, who can bring it to life again? As he characterized it, "greater than the Churban Ho'aretz is the Churban Ho'umah."

We as Jews, have a double battle to fight and win. The battle for the Jews and the battle for Judaism. For the battle for the Jews we have to contribute of our "sweat, blood and tears" and all possible means to the war effort to save as many Jewish lives as possible, so that we may survive physically. As for the battle of Judaism we have to fight culturally and spiritually to establish more academies of learning in the Diaspora, such as Yeshivoth and Parochial Schools to replace those great European Yeshivoth of Telz, Mir, Slabodka, Lomzo and Radin, which have been annihilated by the brutal Nazis. We have to battle to regain our Homeland in Palestine, where all our dreams and hopes as Torah-true Jews may become truly realized. And let us remember and understand that both Jews and Judaism need the Holy Land in order to

survive as a holy and great people among the nations of the world. We, the American Jews, must not become enticed by the powerful influence of the American Council for Judaism,—which is neither a council nor Jewish. Let us not heed the advice of the dangerous Mraglim of the twentieth century. Let us rather follow assiduously the courageous stand and advice of Caleb of old, the co-worker of Joshua, who encouraged Israel to continue fighting for the Promised Land with his clarion call to Israel: "עלה נעלה וירשנו אתה כי יכול נוכל לה. (במדבר י"ג, ל). We should go up at once and possess it, for we are able to overcome it" (Numbers XIII, 30). We likewise must be courageous and continue to struggle for the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in the spirit of Caleb and Joshua.

The story of the Mraglim presents a profound message to mankind as well. As in the days of old, when the invasion of Palestine was planned by Moses, we have just experienced a similar invasion upon Western Europe that was planned by the United Nations. The Nazi propagandists and the American isolationists, like the Asafsuf of old, repeatedly warned the Allied High Command that the Atlantic-Wall is impregnable and that the German Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe is invincible. The only prime objective in their minds was to demoralize the Allied forces and delay the liberation of the European people from Nazi tyranny and servitude. Truly, the invasion was postponed from time to time. But it was not until the great and courageous leaders of the United Nations had become inspired by a great vision and pursued the course of Caleb in taking a firm stand against the isolationists and evil

minded people and appointed General Dwight D. Eisenhower as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, that the United Nations began marching onward towards the road of victory and peace. Thus the so-called "super-race," the invincible German might, is being slowly but surely crushed and annihilated on the Italian and Western and Eastern European battlefronts. And we may say with certainty that in spite of the treacherous and venomous propaganda from within and without our ranks, our gallant armies are succeeding in subduing our enemies on the various battlefronts, in destroying them as the King of Arad was destroyed by Moses of old.

Now let us all pray to G-d at the present time when we have to conquer so many enemies and spies, from within and from without the camp of Israel. May G-d soon restore peace and happiness to the world at large, and may He save us from our inner enemies—the enemies of Israel and the enemies of Zion—and bestow upon us the blessing which Moses conferred upon his favorite disciple—Joshua. יה ישיעך מעצת מרגלים. "May G-d deliver thee from the counsel of the spies" and from the "Council of Judaism" and may He bring lasting peace to the world and salvation to Israel. Amen.